AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1 – 11. (Canceled)

12.   (Currently Amended) A method of selecting, for a first block of a first image based on an array of pixels, a similar block of a second image based on said array of pixels, the method including:

(i)   defining a reference pixel in said array;

(ii)   deriving at least one threshold value based on a previously-derived mismatch value for at least one further block of the first image;

(iii)   defining [at least one] a plurality of search zones in said array, labelled by integer index i, said zones surrounding said reference pixel and having a radius which increases for increasing i;

(iv)   after step (ii), for successive zones, and for successive pixels in each zone, determining a block of the second image based on each said successive pixel, and determining a mismatch value between said first block of the first image and said determined block based on a mismatch criterion; and

(v)   selecting said similar block of the second image as the determined block for which said determined mismatch is lowest;

wherein step (iv) is terminated upon at least one termination criterion being satisfied, said

termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said threshold value.

13.   (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 12 in which in step (ii)

said [at least one theshold value is determined based on a previously-derived minimum

mismatch value for] at least one further block of the image is adjacent said first block of the

image.

Claim 14. (Canceled)

15.   (Currently Amended) A method of selecting, for a first block of a first

image based on an array of pixels, a similar block of a second image based on said array of

pixels, the method including:

(i)   defining a reference pixel in said array;

(ii)   deriving at least one threshold value based on a mismatch value of a second

block of the first image adjacent said first block;

(iii)   defining [at least one] a plurality of search zones in said array, labelled by

integer index i, said zones surrounding said reference pixel and having a radius which

increases for increasing i;

(iv)   after step (ii), for successive zones, and for successive pixels in each zone,

determining a block of the second image based on each said successive pixel, and

determining a mismatch value between said first block of the first image and said

determined block based on a mismatch criterion; and

(v)   selecting said similar block of the second image as the determined block for

which said determined mismatch is lowest;

wherein step (iv) is terminated upon at least one termination criterion being satisfied, said

termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said threshold value.

Claims 16 to 23. (Canceled)

24.   (Currently Amended) A method of encoding a first image which includes

defining successive blocks of the first image, and for each block of the first image:

selecting a the similar block of a second image by a method according to claim 12;

and

encoding the block of the first image as data specifying the similar block of the

second image, and the data specifying differences between the block of the first image and

the similar block of the second image.

Claim 25. (Canceled)

26.   (Currently Amended) A method of encoding a first image which includes

defining successive blocks of the first image, and for each block of the first image:

selecting a the similar block of a second image by a method according to claim 15;

encoding the block of the first image as data specifying the similar block of the

second image, and the data specifying differences between the block of the first image and

the similar block of the second image.

Claims 27-34. (Canceled)

35.   (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium storing computer-

executable program code for performing a method according to claim 12, whereby

execution of the code by a processor causes the processor to select a the similar block of

the second image.

Claim 36. (Canceled)

37.   (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium storing computer-

executable program code for performing a method according to claim 15, whereby

execution of the code by a processor causes the processor to select a the similar block of

the second image.

Claim 38. (Canceled)

39.   (New) A method according to claim 15 in which, in step (i), said reference

pixel is defined based on an estimated motion vector associated with said first block.

40.   (New) A method according to claim 15 in which, prior to step (iii), a step is

performed of deriving a zone number M, and in step (iii) the number of said search zones is

M.